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15 November 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Administration)

SUBJECT: Management Staff Progress Report on
Agency Records Management Program

1. Reference is made to the subject report dated 29 October 1954, a copy of which you sent this office for comment and action. It states that the Area Records Officer in the Security Office has had difficulty in getting top level support in the development of a records disposition plan. It further states that the Security Office has "an unusually large number of records and, based on Agency-wide experience, it would appear that a substantial number of them could be transferred to the inactive status in the Records Center, thereby making equipment and space which is badly needed available to them. As of now, less than the equivalent of one four-drawer file cabinet of inactive records has been transferred to the Center."

2. The records disposition program has the unqualified support of the writer. The reference to the absence of "top level support" is assumed to refer to the attitude of the heads of components within this Office in their resistance to retiring records which they consider to be of active value to their operations.

3. The Area Records Officer was directed to conduct a comprehensive survey within this Office, which was made during the period November 1953 to April 1954. His report, containing a consolidated schedule of approximately 110 categories of records, was submitted in June 1954. It presented many suggestions and recommendations for reducing Security Office files. The resulting reduction was not satisfactory to the writer, and, therefore, the Area Records Officer was instructed in October to prepare a Security Office statement of policy on records disposal to include a set of instructions for implementing the policy. This paper is in preparation at this date and will enunciate standards requiring positive action for the destruction or retirement of unnecessary or inactive files.

4. The situation in this Office, with respect to disposal of records, is considerably different from that which prevails in other offices where documented matters are readily identified as closed or dead upon their completion. The great bulk of records of this Office consists of individual security files, the contents of each of which may at any time become extremely active and essential to the proper functioning of this Office.

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5. The research work of our counter-intelligence program requires the continual review of numerous security files, regardless of their age or activity, which may be indicated to have a bearing on a case under review. The links and associations which are either established or negated through research of this nature are indispensable to a counter-intelligence program. In addition to the counter-intelligence work, the routine review in the appraisal of new applicant cases demands countless reviews of other files in order to establish the security suitability of applicants. In addition, this Office receives frequent calls from the front office and other components of the Agency requesting, on an expedite basis, security information on individuals whose files might otherwise be considered inactive.

6. The above recitation of obstacles to establishing inactivity or obsolescence of a file in the Security Office is not, however, considered a complete barrier to the establishment of an effective documents disposal plan. The previously mentioned policy and action paper now in preparation by the Area Records Officer is expected to result in the designation of two or three employees to be engaged exclusively in the review of security files to determine those which may, with the least inconvenience to personnel security checking procedures, be retired to the Records Center. It is also planned that a drive will be made to eliminate unnecessary duplicate copies of documents in our records. This alone should provide considerable additional filing space.

7. As soon as the above-mentioned policy and action paper is completed and adopted in this Office, it will be referred to you for your information.


Sheffield Edwards
Director of Security

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